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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

February 15, 2021

Self-Reflection, Repentance, and Preparation

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." On Wednesday, many of our churches will use these or similar words to impart ashes to their members. It is a ritual many of us do every year to mark the beginning of the Season of Lent. Lent has historically been a season of self-reflection, repentance, and preparation in the church originally preparing new converts for Baptism on Easter.

Preparing for Lent this year feels very different then past years. Part of this is because this is the last ritual of the church we have not already had to figure out how to do virtually or in ways that take into account COVID- 19 restrictions. The beginning of Lent, is a reminder that we are quickly approaching the one year anniversary of the pandemic in the Southeast. The other reason this year feels different is that in a lot of ways, we never left the Lent we began in the end of February 2020. Easter Sunday came, but Lent continued.

Self-reflection, repentance, and preparation. These three acts have been fairly constant in the last year. The time the lock down gave some, has created an atmosphere that made self-reflection prevalent. The COVID -19 pandemic has shown a light on the pandemic of racism that many of us, especially those of us who are white, have had to do a lot of self-reflection about, both as individuals and as organizations. This hard self-reflection has begun to lead to repentance and a greater emphasis on Black Lives, culture, and history which should have been happening for centuries. This last year, the Church shifted in how we gather and worship. It feels like we

have been preparing for something new, for some new work God has instore for the Church- preparations we started last year with self-reflection and repentance. Preparations we have been collectively doing in small groups; in conversations among clergy; in workshops offered by the National Church; in bible studies and Zoom coffee hour conversations; in good and faithful preaching and gathering; in service in and with our communities.

As we begin Lent later this week with the reminder that we are dust, my prayer and my hope is that we continue the self-reflection, repentance, and preparation; the good and faithful Lenten practices we began last year. My hope is we have the courage and the endurance to walk in the Lenten wilderness a little longer and to continue to prepare for the new work God is doing in each of us and our churches and our communities so that we might be ready when Easter comes anew.

Heather Fosburgh
Associate Conference Minister

News from the Conference Office

From the Generosity Coordinator

by Min. Carrole Moss

Greetings, I pray that this finds you ALL healthy, happy, safe, and encouraged. Hopefully, you have received your 2020 year-end giving statements. We are so grateful for all the ways that you continue to support us...in the midst of a PANDEMIC/COVID-19, your generosity continues. We say **THANK YOU!** It is because of you that we are able to continue to do this work.

Most of us are tired, emotionally drained, and a bit weary. We rarely leave our homes and are longing for that personal touch. We are missing community, gatherings, and have started to become distant, one from the other. So today, just for a moment, take some time for yourself. Close your eyes, reflect and meditate.

Covid-19 has taught me some things:

- It's okay to not be okay,

- It's okay to feel frustrated and overwhelmed,
- It's okay to feel whatever you feel, as long as you are still feeling,
- It's okay to crave or seek relief.

Galatians 6:9 teaches: *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

We are one in the spirit, we are one in the Lord;
and we pray that all unity will one day be restored;
we will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;
we will work with each other, we will work side by side;
and we will guard each man's dignity and save each other's pride,
and they will know that we are Christians by our love.

Peace and continued blessings as we continue to JOURNEY, **TOGETHER.**

Winter 2021 Grant Applications

In July 2009, we launched the **Transforming Churches - Transforming Lives** campaign with the goal of raising money that would help carry the Southeast Conference into a new phase of growth and renewal, building on the remarkable progress achieved during the prior decade. For the last number of years, we have been in the distribution of funds phase of the campaign.

Transforming Churches • Transforming Lives
SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

For the Winter 2021 grant cycle we began accepting applications on January 20 for grants. **This cycle will end March 3, 2021.** There are a few steps to keep in mind before applying:

- If you **have been awarded a grant in the past**, please make sure your "Project Evaluation Form" has been completed and submitted. This form can be found on our website. This is necessary and needed before your application can be considered.
- Please read and follow the guidelines (these can be found on the application form).
- **A detailed budget** should be submitted with the application. This is most important.
- If at all possible, please submit your application **before the deadline date.** That allows for any questions or concerns to be addressed prior to the deadline.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to Generosity Coordinator Carrole Moss at cmoss@secucc.org.

Yearbook- Only 14 Days Left!

Thank you to all the churches who have submitted their yearbook reports. For those who have not submitted your yearbook reports, you have 14 days left to do so. All Yearbook Reports are due **February 28, 2021.**

Yearbook numbers are very important for the Conference. Your reporting helps the Conference and the National Setting track trends and changes in our churches as well as sets the number of delegates the Southeast Conference sends to General Synod and the amount the Conference pays for UCC legal services. You can find all the details about how to submit your yearbook numbers here. If you have any questions, please reach out to Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org or 404-719-6572.

Annual Clergy Information Review

Calling all Ministers: Ordained, Licensed, and Commissioned! The time has come once again for you to fill out your Annual Information Review. This year's form, which looks back on 2020, helps the Conference and the National Setting have the correct and current information on you and your ministry. It also allows the Conference to identify how we can better support you in your ministry. Please either fill out the form online or

download and fill in the PDF and return it to the Conference Office by February 28.

Opportunities to Serve within the SEC Conference

Perhaps you are seeking a way to become more involved in the ministry that happens on behalf of the Southeast Conference. If so, we are seeking both clergy and lay members for the following Conference Committees. These are positions appointed by the Board of Directors and can be filled immediately: Personnel Committee, Commission on Ministry Teams, Finance Committee. If interested, please complete a Nominations Form here: https://www.secucc.org/resources/nominations-form/

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

- **Monday, February 22, 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**
  We will gather at the end of January to reflect on pandemic changes and how they might impact the life of our local churches. There is also the question about what current practices churches might maintain into the future. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation. REGISTER

Clergy Zoom Connections for February

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**
  Tuesday, February 16, 23 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/479440102
- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**
  Thursday, February 18- 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)
  20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection

following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)
Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/96976838422

- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**
  Tuesday, February 23, 2021 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)
  Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/354744689
- **Tennessee Clergy Conversation**
  Thursday, February 25 – 7 p.m. Eastern (6:00 p.m. Central)
  Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81696023261

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2021. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of February 21

- Trinity Congregational UCC; Athens, Alabama
- SEC Standing Committees, Advisory Committees, Task Forces
- Tim Downs
- Albert Ghergich
- Darryl Trimiew
- Maxine Simmons Bolden

Week of February 28

- United Church of Cookeville; Cookeville, Tennessee

- PATHWAYS Theological Education Program
- Roy Bain
- Douglas Farmer
- Vant Hardaway
- David Speno

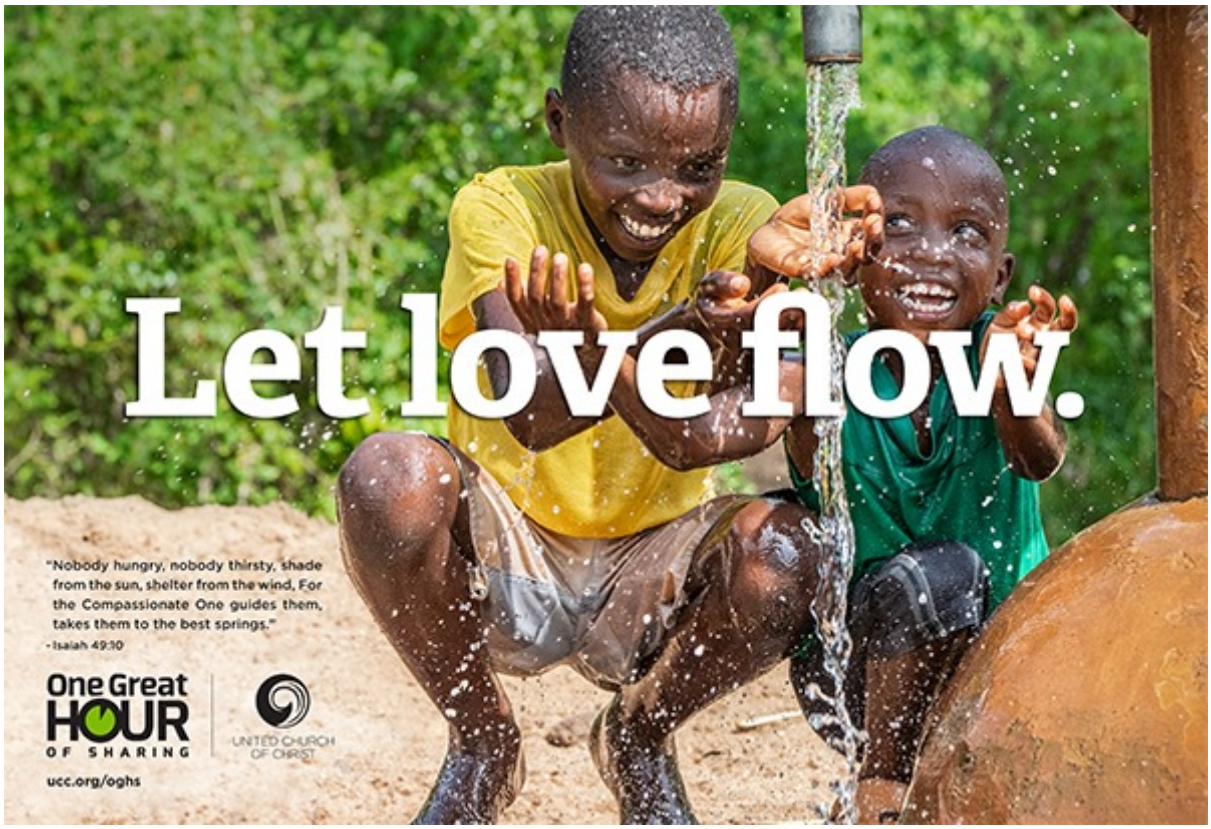
Prayer Concerns

- The **Rev. Keith Mills**, Conference Minister of the Northern Plains Conference, UCC died suddenly on Feb. 1. Please keep his family, the churches and clergy of the Northern Plains Conference is prayer.
- The **Rev. Emily Bel**, pastor of Forgiving Heart UCC, Columbus, GA) has been hospitalized since Feb. 6 with COVID/pneumonia. She is getting stronger but please keep her in prayer.
- The **Southeast Conference Search Committee** has begun reading ministerial profiles of potential Conference Minister candidates. Please keep the Committee in your prayers as they seek a person to present to the Annual Meeting who will provide leadership for the Conference.

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN

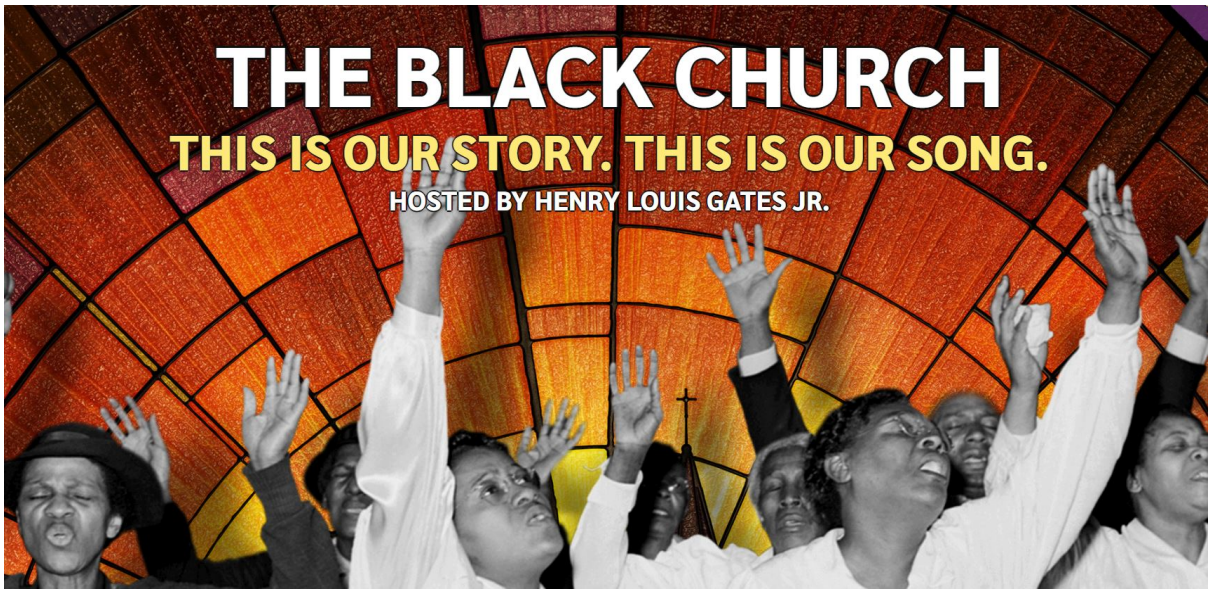
News from the Wider Church



One Great Hour of Sharing Coming in March

One Great Hour of Sharing® (OGHS) is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within Wider Church Ministries. OGHS is at work all around the year, all around the world - sharing resources and changing lives. The UCC works with domestic and international partners, to provide support to health, education, refugee, agricultural, and emergency relief initiatives.

The suggested offering date is March 21, 2021 (or choose any date in Lent). 2021 OGHS denominational resources are available online here.



Celebrating Black History Month

Premiering on February 16 and 17, Public Broadcasting is featuring "The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song." This series explores the 400-year-old story of the Black church in America, the changing nature of worship spaces, and the men and women who shepherded them from the pulpit, the choir loft, and church pews. https://www.pbs.org/weta/black-church/. Side note: as you watch, be sure to look for the many UCC connections, including our own First Church Atlanta and Rev. Otis Moss from Trinity UCC in Chicago.

Important Information about Hymnals and Copyrights

UCC General Counsel Heather Kimmel has created an FAQ document about copyrights and UCC hymnals. The denomination has been getting lots of copyright questions about hymnals specifically, so hopefully this FAQ is helpful.

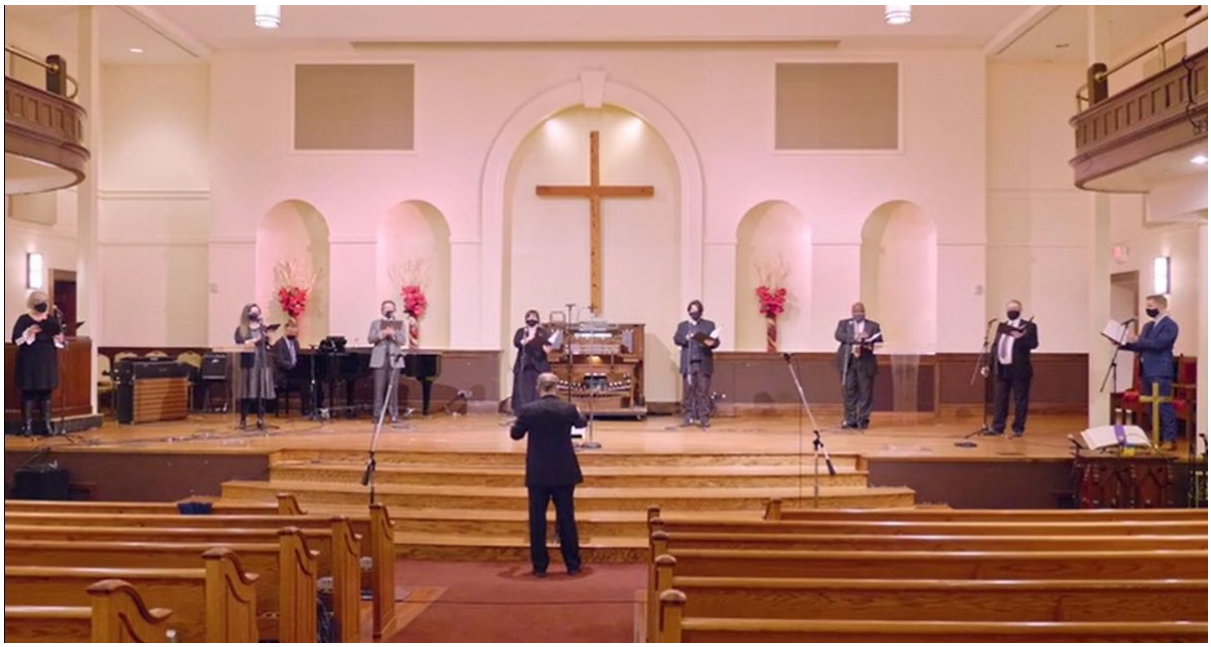
Local Church News

Invitation to the Installation of Rev. Dr. Shelli Poe

Safe Harbor Family Church and the Southeast Conference's Commission on Ministry is excited to invite members of the Southeast Conference to the Installation of Rev. Dr. Shelli Poe as the Pastor of Safe Harbor Family Church in Clinton, Mississippi. You are invited to join Safe Harbor's **6:00 pm CDT service on March 14, 2021 by Zoom.** To attend, please RSVP here and you will receive the Zoom link a couple of days before the service.

Rev. Dr. Shelli was ordained in 2007 with the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches and received privilege of call in the United Church of Christ in 2010. Prior to her call to pastor at Safe Harbor, she served at Pilgrim Congregational Church (Warren, NJ), Sojourners United Church of Christ (Charlottesville, VA), and at Safe Harbor as Theologian in Residence and Director of Christian Education.

Shelli holds a Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Virginia. She is a Visiting Professor at Iliff School of Theology and an Affiliated Scholar at Millsaps College.



Atlanta Music Festival Continues Online in 2021

In 1910, four years after the Atlanta race riots, the Reverend Henry Hugh Proctor of First Congregational Church of Atlanta designed a concert series

to promote racial reconciliation through the arts. Proctor's "Atlanta Colored Music Festival" introduced Atlanta audiences, both black and white, to renowned African American concert musicians. Current Pastor Dwight Andrews revived his congregation's music festival tradition in 2001 through association with Meridian Herald, a musical arts nonprofit led by Steven Darsey. A joint project of First Congregational Church and Meridian Herald, the Festival addresses the dynamic character of American music and arts through the lens of African American music in the classical tradition. Undaunted by the pandemic, the Atlanta Music Festival continued in 2021 with virtual performances by Metropolitan Opera star Morris Robinson, Timothy Miller, and the award-winning Meridian Chorale. Watch the entire festival online via Vimeo.

Trainings and Conferences

Healthy Boundaries 101 and 201 Offered

2021 Courses

- HB 201 scheduled for March 6 and March 13 (learn more)
- HB 101 scheduled for April 30 and May 1 (learn more)

Overview

As most are aware, Healthy Boundary training is now **mandatory** in the United Church of Christ. These workshops are intended to equip ordained, commissioned, and licensed clergy, as well as other church leaders and staff, to understand healthy boundaries in ministry relationships. Healthy

and vital ministries rely on trust and mutual support to create spaces of welcome and safety for all. Leaders must understand the role of power and vulnerability in order to create and maintain healthy boundaries and to choose healthy self-care strategies.

These workshops are a joint endeavor of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia and the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ and fulfill requirements for such a workshop every five years for DOC clergy and every four years for UCC clergy to retain ministerial standing.

There are two workshops offered:

- **Healthy Boundaries 101:** Fundamentals is an introduction to healthy boundaries for clergy and church leaders. Topics include power, vulnerability, dating, friendships, dual relationships, transference, intimacy, hugging, and self-care. It is a prerequisite to Healthy Boundaries 201.
- **Healthy Boundaries 201:** Beyond Basics and Into the Internet is an advanced discussion of healthy boundaries for clergy and church leaders, designed for those who have completed Healthy Boundaries 101. Participants will cover boundaries, power, vulnerability, and self-care, as well as topics in internet technology and social media. There is a prerequisite of Healthy Boundaries 101 or similar foundation workshop.

Global Ministries Webinar on March 3

Representatives from the Moravian Church in Nicaragua, Christian Mission Church of Nicaragua, Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras, and Christian Commission for Development in Honduras will share about their work responding to the two category four hurricanes, Eta and Iota. In November of 2020, they caused massive damage and flooding across Nicaragua and Honduras.

Since the storms hit, these global partners have responded quickly to assist their communities and walk alongside those impacted by the destruction of the storms. Speakers will share about the work that has been done to date and about the long-term plans for rebuilding affected communities.

This webinar will take place on March 3 at 3:00 P.M. EST you can click here to register for the webinar. If you would like to learn more about the work of partners in Nicaragua and Honduras responding to hurricanes Eta and Iota click here.

Conference Calendar

January 20 - March 3
Spring 2021 Grant Applications Open

February 16 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

February 18 @ 12:00 pm - 12:30 pm EST
Live Harp Meditations for Ministers

February 18 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST
Commission on Ministry Meeting

February 22 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST
Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

February 23 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EST
Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers

February 23 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

February 25 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST
Zoom Conversation for Tennessee Clergy

March 2 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

March 11 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST
Board of Directors Meeting

View the **full calendar** of events online: https://www.secucc.org/events/

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch;** cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris;** dharris@secucc.org